

The Builder.

NO. 1000.

SATURDAY, JULY 17, 1847.



THE Health of Towns bill is withdrawn, and the Wellington statue is to remain on the top of the arch at Hyde-park Corner,—that is, if the Government do not change their minds and eat their words again, which, seeing the number of times they have already done so in respect of the arch, would scarcely surprise us. Alas! for the consistency, wisdom, and inflexibility of our statesmen! Competent persons have pronounced against the present site of the testimonial, says Lord Morpeth, and we call upon the committee to redeem their pledge, and take down the statue. The public agree with the competent persons, again urges his lordship, and the statue is to come down. And then, when further attempts to hold their ground have been made by the most pertinacious of committees, his lordship writes to the Duke of Rutland:—

"My Lord Duke,—I have now the honour to acquaint you, that her Majesty's Government feel themselves compelled to abide by their decision, that the equestrian statue of the Duke of Wellington should be removed from the top of the arch, and they are about to submit an estimate to Parliament for the erection of a suitable pedestal, which it is intended to place in the Green-park within view of the Duke of Wellington's house. They will not, however, think it necessary to call upon the sub-committee to remove the statue till the pedestal is ready for its reception."

The pedestal is designed, preparations are talked of for lowering the ponderous mass: and yet, after all, the prime minister rises coolly in the House and says, *the Government do not intend to permit the removal of the statue*;—"Since last I addressed the House," were his lordship's words, according to the *Times*, "I have had a communication with the illustrious Duke with reference to the statue; and, in substance, his reply to my inquiry was,—that he viewed it as a question to be considered, not upon individual, but upon public grounds—that many persons were of opinion, that its removal from the arch would be looked upon as a mark of disapprobation on the part of the Crown; and that, though he had received too many evidences of royal favour to suppose there had been any such intention, as such would be the effect, upon public grounds, he deprecated the proposition to take the statue down from its present position. This statement has been communicated to her Majesty, and I have received the Queen's commands to say that the Government do not intend to permit the removal of the statue."

We feel ashamed while we write it, and there are some who ought to feel more ashamed while they read it.

The few preliminary proceedings which resulted in this ultimate decision, were simply these. Lord Brougham, in the House of Lords, moved for the production of the correspondence which had taken place on this subject, and took occasion to say, in the course of his speech, that the Duke would feel himself hurt beyond expression, insulted, and held up to ridicule if the statue were removed,—if they dared to remove it. In the other House, Lord Q. Bentinck gave notice that he should move

a humble address to the Queen, praying her Majesty not to revoke her grant of the arch as the site for the statue. Upon this, and with reference to the previous statement, Lord John Russell asked for time to obtain knowledge of the present feelings of the Duke (of which by the way, his lordship must have been fully aware), saying:—"I may state that her Majesty has expressed a wish that nothing should be done that could be painful to the feelings, or be considered at all disrespectful to the greatest and most celebrated of her subjects. If I find they are adverse to the statue being removed to the pedestal suggested for it, I should not propose any vote in supply for the purpose; and I am authorized to state, her Majesty would readily consent to the statue remaining in its present position."

And then, in due course, came the decision we have already quoted, involving more injury to the national taste and the national reputation for taste, than may at first sight appear to be the case.

No one attempts to say the conjunction is beautiful: the utmost that is heard from those who advocated the continuance of the statue in its present position is, that "it don't look so bad after all,"—and this of a statue on which thirty thousand pounds have been spent, and an equally costly triumphal arch! And even these know all the time, or they know nothing of art, that the arrangement is contrary to all principles, and that the effect could not be and is not satisfactory. When we asserted long ago, and proved, that the arch was destroyed by the statue, and the statue destroyed by being placed on the arch, the line of argument adopted was quoted throughout the country, and never controverted. We defy disproof.

The reason now given for keeping it on its present bad eminence, all others having failed, is quite preposterous. When the committee said, that to "overthrow the monument in the Duke of Wellington's very sight" would be a "most offensive and wanton affront," and continued,—"He, from the height of his glory may despise it; but it will be deeply felt throughout the whole British empire—it will be deeply felt by all his old companions in arms throughout Europe, and by all the governments of the nations which he had contributed to save,"—they talked, absolute nonsense, and knew it to be such, but did so because they believed it would tell. How to explain the Duke's belief, however, that its removal would be looked upon by many as a mark of disapprobation on the part of the Crown, is more difficult. Surely his grace cannot believe this? The Government and the country are alike anxious to provide for the statue a fitting pedestal,—the most fitting pedestal. The former foolishly permitted the appearance to be tried *in situ*, but with the express stipulation, that if not approved of, the statue should come down; and now, forsooth, they say virtually, whether the effect be bad or good we care not, if you remove the figure, you insult our distinguished commander. The artifice, not to say subterfuge, is really too transparent.*

We regret this decision in respect of the statue even more than the withdrawal of the Health Bill, much as the latter is to be deplored, and vehemently protest against it on the part of the vast majority of unprejudiced competent persons throughout the Kingdom. The discussion of the latter subject and the hold its importance is taking on the public

* The Government even proposed to make two Wellington testimonials instead of one, by directing that the arch should be dismantled, after the manner in which triumphal arches were formerly adorned, in honour of the Duke, and dedicated to him!

mind, will themselves tend to make the necessity of legislation less urgent; moreover early in the next session an improved bill may be brought in and the object attained; whereas in the case of the arch, if the whole of the scaffolding be removed and the question once closed, there for many years to come the monstrous conjunction will remain, to disfigure the western entrance to the metropolis and vitiate the public taste,—at one and the same time our laughing-stock and our disgrace.

SKETCH OF THE PROFESSIONAL LIFE OF GEORGE DANCE, ARCHITECT, R.A.*

THERE are few architects since the time of Sir William Chambers who have more worthily achieved a high degree of professional reputation than Mr. George Dance; and on a recent occasion, when our excellent friend and late vice-president, Mr. Tite, favoured us with an instructive and interesting epitome of the lectures delivered at the Royal Academy, by Sir John Soane, it occurred to me that some account of the master mind, from which Sir John derived much of his professional knowledge, might prove an interesting subject for a paper.

In this labour of love I have enjoyed the advantage (through the kindness of my friend, Mr. Thomas Poynder) of an introduction to Mr. George Dance, of Peter House College, Cambridge, a grandson of the subject of our present memoir; and the biographical part of this paper has been supplied by that gentleman,—a gratifying proof that the abilities and reputation of one of England's most distinguished architects are appreciated and cherished by an immediate descendant, worthy of the name he so honourably bears.

To our indefatigable honorary secretary, Mr. Bailey, I am also greatly indebted for an examination, from the Soane collection, of the designs and working drawings of several of Mr. Dance's works, which will be alluded to in this paper.

George Dance, born March 20th, 1741, O.S., was the fifth son of George Dance, architect, and clerk of the works of the city of London.† Mr. Dance, sen., was a man of considerable eminence in his profession. He designed the Mansion House (a building, in my humble judgment, possessing many fine points, and by no means deserving the severe criticism it has been subjected to): Shoreditch church, Bethnal-green, Aldgate, and St. Luke's, Old-street, are also the works of Mr. Dance, sen.

When about seventeen, George Dance proceeded to Italy for the purpose of studying architecture, being placed by his father under the care of his elder brother, Nathaniel, then studying the works of the great masters of painting in that land of the fine arts.

Surrounded by the monuments of ancient and modern art which adorn the cities of Italy, and visiting successively Rome, Naples, Florence, and Parma, he devoted himself with such ardour to the cultivation of his profession, that in a short time he had become so far master of the science as to gain the prize in architecture,—a gold medal,—given by the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Parma in the year 1763.

The subject proposed was a design for a public gallery for painting and sculpture, and it fortunately happens that Mr. Dance's letter to his father, giving an account of the competition and his success, is still preserved.

The letter is dated from Rome, June 7th, 1763, and is as follows:—

"The inclosed is a sketch for a public gallery for statues, pictures, &c., which subject was given last year by the Royal Academy of Parma for the concurrence in architecture. As I was willing to distinguish myself before I left Italy, I thought there could not be a better opportunity than that which offered itself at Parma. I therefore applied myself with all assiduity, and sent my drawings to Parma last April, where, together with many others from all parts of Italy, they were exposed in a public hall for some time, till the final judgment, which

* Read at the dinner meeting of the Royal Institute of Architects. † He was at that time styled master, and not, as at the present day, clerk of the city works; and the office appears to have been in those days rather differently conducted. The appointment was held by purchase, and the remuneration was not by salary, but according to the services performed; there was no staff of assistants, and Mr. Dance, sen., had all the architects to meet him on a stated day once a week, at the Mayor's Coffee-house, to receive his orders and instructions.